

WEST GLACIER STATION



The Great Northern Railway moved through northwestern Montana in 1891 as it worked to complete a transcontinental line between St. Paul, Minn., and Seattle. Tourism developed as word spread of the region's natural beauty and abundant wildlife.

In 1910, President William Howard Taft designated what is now Glacier National Park, whose lakes, forests, meadows and soaring mountains attracted more than 2.3 million visitors in 2014. About half of the more than 400 national park system units are easily accessible via Amtrak-served communities.

To welcome visitors to the west side of the park, the Great Northern opened the present wood frame depot in 1910; it was later enlarged in 1935 with the older section becoming the baggage and express area. Rough-hewn siding extends over the entire structure

and gives it a rustic appearance that blends well with other park structures. The center of the building features a clipped cross-gable. A trellised pathway originally connected the depot with the Belton Chalet, one in a series of resort hotels constructed by the Great Northern in and around the park.

West Glacier is one of five Amtrak stations that provide access to Glacier National Park. The others include Whitefish, Essex, East Glacier (open mid-spring to mid-fall) and Browning (open mid-fall to mid-spring).

DEPOT ADAPTIVE REUSE

Today the West Glacier depot is owned by the Glacier National Park Conservancy, the park's official non-profit partner that provides support for preservation, education and research in Glacier through philanthropy and outreach. One of the conservancy's predecessor organizations received the building as a donation from Burlington Northern Railroad (now part of BNSF) in 1991 and converted it into a retail shop.



The former waiting room now houses a retail shop.

Subsequent renovation projects, including the enclosure of a covered picnic area to create office space and a conference room, have been completed in a manner that complements and preserves existing historic fabric. The depot also houses the conservancy's operations offices and merchandise storage area.

In the retail space, original wood paneling and the ticket counter form a suitable backdrop for displays of clothing, books and souvenirs. Revenue from the four stores operated by the conservancy supports vital programs at Glacier. "These efforts include funding for 8,000 school children to participate in field trips to the park each year, internships for future park rangers and critical mountain goat research," says Mark Preiss, the conservancy's chief executive officer.

The organization actively seeks grants to assist with building rehabilitation and maintenance to ensure that

"Amtrak's an important link that allows people from across the country to access the wilderness resource right in our own backyard."

– Mark Preiss, Glacier National Park Conservancy CEO

INSIDE THE STATION

STATION SERVICE (FY14)

- 5,013 Riders
- \$851,947 in Revenue
- Served by the *Empire Builder*

DEVELOPMENT

- Underutilized space in historic depot adaptively reused to house retail and office functions

KEY FEATURES

- Depot acts as rail gateway to the western side of Glacier National Park
- Revenue from depot store operations supports preservation, education and research programs in the park

proceeds from store operations directly support the park and its programs.

During the summer high season, approximately 200 people per day visit the depot; Amtrak passengers on the two daily trains use the adjacent platform. "Train service has historically connected visitors to Glacier National Park, back to the early days of the Great Northern Railroad," notes Preiss.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Adaptive reuse ensured the depot would continue to welcome visitors throughout the year
- Successive renovations have maintained and preserved depot's historic fabric

Thank-you to Amy Dempster of the Glacier National Park Conservancy for her assistance. Images courtesy of the conservancy.